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ABSTRACT

This book challenges fundamental assumptions about the opportunities for equity-minded educational reform, using data from case studies of districts nationwide and their experiences with court-ordered detracking. The case studies show how white, upper middle class parents exercised a disproportionate amount of power in local school policy making and how that power was wielded to hinder reform opportunities intended to benefit low income students of color. It shows how many school reforms must emerge and develop within a climate of political interests and conflicting values and beliefs. The book argues for combining a nuanced awareness of local practices, sensitivity to local norms, and the firm hand of the courts, suggesting that community resistance will almost always contort bottom-up efforts at reforms like detracking. The book includes three parts: (1) "Courting the Courts" (e.g., inequitable placements and the importance of judicial values); (2) "Romancing the Zone" (e.g., putting reform in context, initiating change through mandate, and equating black with bad); and (3) "Making Mandates Matter" (change and constancy, reform and opposition in perspective, and modifying the change literature as applied to equity-minded reform). Tables and data are appended. (Contains 199 references.) (SM)

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